

Chris (*producing a small paper bag with a fanfare*) Da da da DA-AL!

John Oh hey he's a good lad, your fella.

Chris (*holding them up*) Now then. Rod and I give you these sunflower seeds from our flower shop on ONE condition. That you, John Clarke, come back to this hall and give us a TALK!

Everyone erupts in agreement. John looks round incredulous

John Me?

Chris Spare us from another "history of broccoli" —

John Do a talk? What've I ever done except work in the dales?

Chris (*going to "throw" the seeds*) Suit yourself.

John All right, ALL RIGHT! (*Rescuing the seeds from Chris*) This is me *pièce de résistance*! (*Getting some seeds out*) You take some of these ... (*sprinkling them*) ... little parcels of sunlight. Then get one of these — (*he takes a gas candle-lighter pen from his pocket and clicks it*)

Celia Good God.

John Set fire to the top, toast the seeds — turns your mouth into liquid Yorkshire!

Ruth Oh I've had one of these! My Eddie did some last Christmas. Set fire to the decking.

Jessie In light of which, might I suggest we attempt this outside.

Chris Everyone out!

Cora (*grabbing the drink with zeal*) I'm gone, honey, I am already gone.

Chris, Cora, Celia, Jessie and Ruth bustle out

John swings Annie back

John Come here, you. (*He kisses her*)

Annie How was your day?

John Thrill me. Tell me something I didn't know about broccoli.

Annie Put it this way. I now know as much about broccoli as Chris knows about t'ai chi.

John laughs

(*Over this*) The only difference is, I don't try to teach a class on it.

John Hey. Don't knock it. (*He strokes her hair*) Thirty years ago if that woman hadn't fallen off a table trying to get a whole Chinese restaurant singing *Jumping Jack Flash*, you and I would never have met. (*He holds her face as if recalling this moment — possibly more*)

heavily than he might normally do) I only plucked up courage to ask you to the cinema 'cause I was picking noodles out of your hair.

Annie *(after a beat, stroking his hair back)* You were up Grizedale?

John I was. Overseeing junior rangers putting up forest fences. God, they all look about twelve.

Annie I know.

John *(after a beat)* Then this afternoon I nipped in to see ol' Doc Morton.

Annie *(instantly turning to ice)* Today?

John Now don't — *(“get het up”)*

Annie I thought you wanted me with you.

John Mrs Clarke. There isn't a day goes by when I don't. *(Beat)* I just kind of needed to get the results on me own.

Annie So what did it ...? The blood, the cells, what was it in the end? They think it's OK. *(Telling him the answer she wants to hear)* Fixable. With blood. It's just — transfusion, isn't it? Did he say ...? What er — what it'll take?

Chris appears in the doorway

Chris JOHN! You'd better get out here! Cora's on fire.

John *(smiling)* Oh God.

John heads out, passing Chris who clings to the door frame in ecstasy

Chris *(as John passes)* That — is one hell of a brew. *(Pointing)* They've only had one glass — Celia's dancing on her Porsche, Jessie's picking a fight with a “keep left” sign ... *(She knows in a micro-second something's wrong)* What's the matter?

Annie *(beat, then on autopilot)* I'm fine.

Chris I have not put up with you for four hundred years to be batted off with an “I'm fine”.

Annie takes her time

Annie John's got his results.

Chris doesn't have to ask further. After twenty-nine years “putting up”, she doesn't need telling. She just goes to her oldest friend and holds her

Chris guides Annie out

Music starts to play: “We Plough the Fields and Scatter”